The AC’c call for conservation and sustainability is nothing more than an aesthetic difference: it leaves the underlying logic of consumption untouched and recreates the world, and everything in it, as an object to be exploited and expended. Turns case and is the root cause of all the AC harms. Stoekl ‘07:[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Nature has lost what we might call its autonomy; its model is** no longer the bringing -forth of the flower bud, or the energy of the windmill (which “does not unlock energy from the wind currents in order to store it” [14]), but **the violent, commandeering, ordering, and stockpiling of energy by the human as challenging -forth. The human, now revealed as a sort of martial monster, is opposed, in its actions, to the bringing -forth that best characterized poeisis (a causal model in which the human plays only a part). And, Heidegger makes clear in another essay, “The Age of the World Picture,” reality itself in and through technology can only be grasped as a standing reserve, ripe for quantification, stockpiling, use, and disposal, if it is isolated in an objective “picture,” a coherent, passive, inert totality whose only aspect is that it can be brought -forth, by man, violently, in techné. “To represent” objectively (as the Rhine is represented by those who would harness its energy) is “to set out before oneself and to set forth in relation to oneself ” (Heidesser 1977, 132). “That the world becomes picture is one and the same even with the event of man’s becoming suiectum in the midst of that which is” (132). The rise of subjectivity, of the isolated, active self, conquering nature, storing its energy, is inseparable from the appearance of an “anthropology” through which “observation and teaching about the world change into a doctrine of man” (133). Or, we might say, observation and teaching about the world become observation and teaching about man: the measurement of nature’s resources and their stockpiling—and wanton expenditure—are inseparable from the stockpiling and wastage of the human in techno - scientific methods. Man the subject for whom the objective world exists as a resource is quickly reversed and becomes man the object who, under the right conditions, is examined, marshaled, and then releases a specific amount of energy before he himself is definitively depleted. Although Heidegger does not stress this point in “The Age of the World Picture,” he does make this point elsewhere, noting what for him is the inevitable link between the transformation of the world into a giant energy reserve and the transformation of man into a resource to be exploited in, for example, concentration camps.8 Subject/ object; this is the infernal duo that, for Heidegger, characterizes modernity. The world is quantified in order to be exploited by “man,” but man himself is a consequence of this mode of expenditure. The man who hoards, who works to preserve his individual existence and protect it from all threats, is inseparable from a natural world completely transformed and rendered “monstrous” by a kind of instrumental mania. Man himself becomes a resource to be scientifically investigated, fully known, perfected, made fully human (with an identity and consciousness) and put to use.9 This brief excursion through Heidegger on technology is useful, I think, to put the work of ideologists of suburbia and car culture, like Lomasky and Brooks, in perspective. We could argue, following Heidegger, that their version of car culture inevitably entails a subjectivity, one that, as in Heidegger, is both produced by their model and in turn produces it. The illusion “Man” derives his “freedom” from** the **quantification and commodification of natural resources**: oil, to be sure, but also the steel, plastics, and other materials that go to make up the “autonomist” lifestyle. Utility as the autono mists conceive it is inseparable from a freedom that wastes, though they are notably reticent when it comes to discussing the consumption of resources on which their favorite lifestyle depends. Heidegger, although he does not explicitly pose the question of waste, certainly implies it: the Rhine, ruined by all those who exploit it, is a “resource” that has been squandered for the self -satisfied pleasures of domestic life and tourism. I have discussed the analyses of Lomasky and Brooks at such length because they are the most articulate and coherent defenders of the current culture in which we (attempt to) live. These proponents of the ideology of the current American fossil fuel regime valorize a lavish and ruinous wastage but do so in a way that masks it, invoking as they do utility: the squandering of vast amounts of wealth is necessary, indeed is a given, because we are necessarily engaged in developing to the fullest our nature as autonomous, free, individuals. As those free individuals we are the highest being on the earth (as Aristotle would remind us), the most developed. And as such we can be expected to reject any calls to conservation or sustainability. Heidegger, however, would note that our being, our subjectivity, is a quantifiable term that is a function of the very same movement, the very same bringing forth as techné, that renders the world a quantifiable mass ripe for exploitation. And such a subject, immediately transformed into an object, a standing reserve, warehoused in an institution (concentration camp, prison, army, hospital, school, freeway, suburb), is itself ripe for use and disposal. The vaunted subject of the autonomists is for that reason autonomous only in its slavery to a “**monstrous” energy regime. Energy is surely wasted in a challenging, but it is a wastage that goes hand in hand with the production and wastage of a subjectivity that is closed in on itself, concerned with its own comfort, stability, and permanence. The freedom of car culture, of the fossil fuel era, is the freedom of a subject whose imperial grasp is inseparable from its weakness as a quantifiable “dust mote” (as Bataille would put it). Once we have seen the fundamental cult of subjectivity on the part of the autonomists, we can return and consider the model of subjectivity of the sustainability partisans. For them too the chief raison d’être of their model of the future is a subjectivity. Now, however, subjectivity entails not so much the lavish expenditure of a stockpiled energy (cars, freeways, consumer waste) as it does an even more rigorously stockpiled resource base. While Heidgegger’s retro -grouch analysis implied a wanton destruction of the stockpiled energy base (the concentration camp as extreme and no doubt self -exculpating example), the sustainability proponents imagine a standing reserve that would somehow not deplete but rather conserve the resources that go into it. “Humanity” would appropriate and store those resources in such a way that they would be perpetually ready to hand. But nature would still consist of a reserve to be tapped and resources to be expended; the goal of the operation would still be the furthering of the stable human subject, the master of its domain. Now the world is really to be useful, and nature is to be pristine exactly to the extent that that untouched state furthers man’s permanence and comfort on Earth. The quantified, mechanized destruction of Earth becomes the quantified, mechanized preservation of Earth.**

The AC is trapped in the logic of quantification and maximization, where energy sources are brought forth as a mere standing reserve for continued human use, turning case, justifying absolute destruction of humanity, and leading to total war. The only alternative is the logic of unproductive expenditure and sacrifice. Stoekl 2:

**Just as there are two energetic sources of economic value, then—muscle power and inanimate fuel power—so too there are two kinds of expenditure. The stored and available energy derived from fossil or inanimate fuel expenditure, for production or destruction, is different in quality, not merely in quantity, from muscular energy. The latter is profoundly more and other than the mere “power to do work.” No intimacy (in the Bataillean sense) can be envisaged through the mechanized expenditure of fossil fuels. The very use of fossil and nonorganic fuels—coal, oil, nuclear— implies the effort to maximize production through quantification, the augmentation of the sheer quantity of things. Raw material becomes, as Heidegger put it, a standing reserve, a measurable mass whose sole function is to be processed, used, and ultimately discarded.28 It is useful, nothing more (or less), at least for the moment before it is discarded; it is related to the self only as a way of aggrandizing the latter’s stability and position. There is no internal limit, no angoisse or pain before which we shudder; we deplete the earth’s energy reserves as blandly and indifferently as the French revolutionaries (according to Hegel) chopped off heads: as if one were cutting off a head of cabbage. “Good” duality has completely given way to “bad.” As energy sources become more efficiently usable—oil produces a lot more energy than does coal, in relation to the amount of energy needed to extract it, transport it, and dispose of waste (ash and slag)—more material can be treated, more people and things produced, handled, and dumped. Consequently more food can be produced, more humans will be born to eat it, and so on (the carrying capacity of the earth temporarily rises). And yet, under this inanimate fuels regime, the very nature of production and above all destruction changes. Even when things today are expended, they are wasted under the sign of efficiency, utility. This very abstract quantification is inseparable from the demand of an efficiency that bolsters the position of a closed and demanding subjectivity. We “need” cars and SUVs, we “need” to use up gas, waste landscapes, forests, and so on: it is all done in the name of the personal lifestyle we cannot live without, which is clearly the best ever developed in human history, the one everyone necessarily wants, the one we will fight for and use our products (weapons) to protect. We no longer destroy objects, render them intimate, in a very personal, confrontational potlatch; we simply leave items out for the trash haulers to pick up or have them hauled to the junkyard. Consumption (la consommation) in the era of the standing reserve, the framework (Ge - Stell), entails, in and through the stockpiling of energy, the stockpiling of the human: the self itself becomes an element of the standing reserve, a thing among other things. There can hardly be any intimacy in the contemporary cycle of production -consumption -destruction, the modern and degraded version of expenditure. As Bataille put it, concerning intimacy: Intimacy is expressed only under one condition by the thing [la chose]: that this thing fundamentally be the opposite of a thing, the opposite of a product, of merchandise: a burn -off [consumation] and a sacrifice. Since intimate feeling is a burn -off, it is burning -off that expresses it, not the thing, which is its negation. (OC, 7: 126; AS 132: italics Bataille’s) War, too, reflects this nonintimacy of the thing: fossil fuel and nuclear - powered explosives and delivery systems make possible the impersonal destruction of lives in great numbers and at a great distance. Human beings are now simply quantities of material to be processed and destroyed in wars (whose purpose is to assure the continued availability of fossil fuel resources). Killing in modern warfare is different in kind from that carried out by the Aztecs. All the sacrificial elements, the elements by which the person has been transformed in and through death, have disappeared.**

The Alt is to embrace unproductive expenditure, a sacrifice of natural resources. This entails an increase in resource extraction. Conservation practices ignore the limit and re-inscribe the self as the center of concern, only the alt can solve.

Stoekl 3[[2]](#footnote-2):

**In accord with Bataille’s implicit ethical model, one can argue that the limits imposed by carrying capacity evoke two possible responses from societies. First, a society can recognize limits. Here, paradoxically, one violates limits, consciously transgresses them, so to speak, by recognizing them. Through various forms of ritual expenditure one ultimately respects limits by symbolically defying the very principle of conservation and measured growth—of, in other words, limits. “Spending without reserve” is the spending of that which cannot be reinvested because of the limit, and yet the very act of destruction is the transgression of the logic of the limit, which would require, in its recognition, a sage and conservative attentiveness to the dangers of excessive spending. If there is a limit to the production of goods and resources, however, we best respect and recognize that limit through its transgression—through, in other words, the destruction of precious but unusable energy resources. To attempt to reinvest, or put to use, the totality of those resources, to guarantee maximum productivity and growth, would only ignore the limit (rather than transgressing it), thereby eventually lowering the limit if not eliminating it entirely (elimination of carrying capacity, ecological destruction, desertification).25 For this reason, a theory of expenditure is inseparable from, is even indistinguishable from, a theory of depletion. Such an affirmation—of limits and expenditure—entails a general view of economy and, we might add, ecology. In positing such a respect for limits through their transgression, we forgo an individual concern, which would customarily be seen as the human one (but which is not, in Bataille’s view): a concern with personal survival, enrichment, and advancement. From a larger perspective, we forego the needs of Man as a species or moral category (or the needs of God as Man’s moral proxy). The supremacy of self-interest is tied for Bataille to the simple ignorance of limits: not their transgression, but their heedless violation. In the case of transgression of limits, we risk what might be personally comfortable or advantageous in order to attain a larger “glory” that is tied to unproductive expenditure and entails a possible dissolution of the self. From a general perspective, this expenditure is (as Bataille would say) on the scale of the universe; it must also be, in principle, on the scale of the carrying capacity of a given landscape or ecology (else the expenditure would very quickly cancel itself out).**

**The only way we can truly glorify the excess – to spend unrelentlessly is to break free of the categorization of energy as a utility**

**Stoekl 4** –

Bataille’s **energy is** inseparable from that which powers cars and raises elevators, but it is different as well. It is **excess energy, and in that sense it is left over when a job is done, when the limits of growth are reached, or**, in the current situation, **when fossil fuels themselves reveal their profound limitations. Bataille’s energy is a transgression of the limit**, it is what is left over in excess of what can be used within a fundamentally limited human field. As such, it is quite different from what can be used: it is not just left over in the sense of not being consumed; it is fundamentally unusable. **At the point at which quantification reveals its finitude, energy asserts itself as the movement that cannot be stockpiled or quantified**. It is the energy that by definition does not do work, that is insubordinate, that plays now rather than contributing to some effort that may mean something at some later date and that is devoted to some transcendent goal or principle. It is, as Bataille reminds us a number of times, the energy of the universe, the energy of stars and “celestial bodies” that do no work, whose fire contributes to nothing. On earth, it is the energy that traverses our bodies, that moves them in useless and time-consuming ways, that leads to nothing beyond death or pointless erotic expenditure, that defies quantification in measure: elapsed moments, dollars per hour, indulgences saved up for quicker entry into heaven. **Energy is expended in social ritual that is pointless, that is tied not to the adhesion of a group or the security of the individual but to the loss of group and individual identity-”sacrifice**. Bataille’s religion is thus inseparable from Bataille’s energy. Sacrifice is the movement of the opening out, the “communication,” of self and community with death: the void of the universe, the dead God. These are not entities that can be known or studied, but sovereign moments, moments of unconditional expenditure. This entails the expenditure of certainties, of any attempt to establish a transcendent, unconditioned meaning that grounds all human activity, a referent such as Man or God. Precisely because it really is unconditioned, this meaning-”God, if you will-”is sovereign, dependent on nothing, and certainly not on Man and his petty desire or demands. Religion, in the orgiastic movement of the body, is the loss of transcendent meaning, the death of God as virulent force, the traversing of the body by an energy that overflows the limits it recognizes but does not affirm. If there is community it is the unplanned aftereffect and not the essential meaning of this energy of this movement of the death or void of God. Thus **ethics** for Bataille, the **community,** and **its meaning and survival are aftereffects of the expenditure of the sacred.** Bataille’s theory is profoundly ethical but only in the sense that **the instant of preservation**, of meaning, of conservation, of knowledge**, is the unforeseen offshoot of** another movement, that of **the drive to spend without counting, without attempting to anticipate return**. To deny the ethical moment, the moment in which conservation and meaning are established only the better to affirm the destruction of expenditure, is to relegate that destruction to the simple, homogeneous movement of the animal, unaware of limit, meaning, and purposive act. **Expenditure**, in other words, **is not the denial of the human**, its repression, **but instead its affirmation to the point at which it falls: the sacrificial act, the recognition of an energy that does not do “work” for the maintenance of the human**, is the affirmation of a God who is not the slave of the human. It is the impossible moment in which awareness doubles the unknowable loss of energy and the virulence of a God who disbelieves in himself. The ethics of Bataille, then, entail a vision of the future in which the “left-hand sacred,” the sacred of impurity, of eroticism, of the radically unconditioned God, spins off a community in and through which expenditure can be furthered (a community of those with nothing in common). **Not nuclear war, but the channeling of excess in ways that ensure survival** so that more excess can be thrown off. And (one can continue along these lines) not generalized ecocide, but an affirmation of another energy, another religion, another waste, entailing not so much a steady state sustain- ability (with what stable referent? Man?) **but instead a postsustainable state in which we labor in order to expend, not conserve**. Hence the energy, and wealth, of the body-”the energy of libidinous and divine recycling, not the stockpiled, exploited, and dissipated energy of easily measured and used fossil fuels. This book has two goals: in the first part, to sketch out Bataille’s posit ions on energy expenditure, religion of and against the Book, and the city in the second, to extrapolate from those positions and consider current questions of energy use and depletion, religious literalism and fervor, and urban “life.” Urban space is a crucial problem for Bataille in that for him the city is the privileged locus of the physical and geographical elaboration of the sacred: either the right-hand sacred of concentration, hierarchy, and God as repressive force or the left-hand sacred of dispersal, the fall of meaning and sense, and God as figure of the sovereign expenditure of authority8 The city is, finally, the locus of concentration in and as the modern, and any consideration of a transition from an energy-religion complex of Man to one of the death of Man entails a reconsideration of the city as spatial and economic structure: a reconsideration that proposes not just energy efficiency and sustainability, but those elements as aftereffects of a more profound burn-off.

We need to infuse an intimate connection with the world into our decisionmaking practices. Any other method destroys the unique site of deliberation that is debate, epistemic prerequisite to the aff. Barker:

**Meta-transformation means that just as the ego/moi contains and conceals the id/ça, so new modes of individuation resist “worse” or “worst” transformations that they too conceal (i.e. which are not lost as possibilities, since transformation must always remain radically open); this aspect of critical thinking acts as a kind of superego (surmoi), perpetually analyzing and judging the results of previous transformative regional ontologies against current ones. What must be guarded against, through the programming institutions, as a result of the ascendency of the programming and cognitive industries, is any sign of the “mass mystification” [38] resultant from the occlusion of desire by drives, of deep attention by hyper-attention, and of oiko-nomia [39] by consumer capitalism. Meta-transformation is a cumulative process of innovation, a socio-genesis that is clearly a techno-genesis in Stiegler’s sense. The moment “knowledge” transmutes into the condition of a set of rules (or rules as mystifications) that cannot subsequently generate new rules, it is no longer knowledge, but either dogma or marketing (between which there is no différance). This evaluation forms the very core of meta-transformation. Insofar as psychic and collective individuation must be defined – always fluidly – as projected desire, it is always a matter of either dis- or re-enchantment. Enchantment, in the sense in which Stiegler appropriates it from the MEDEF, is the undoing of “cognitive capitalism’s” seizure and control of techniques (skills), knowledge, and consumption, a seizure which, as the word suggests, is a suspension of dynamic development. The forces of transindividuation bring about the adoption not only of cultural histories and techniques but of the dynamic, participatory involvement that can re-direct “telecracy” “back” into democracy** – which in Stiegler’s participatory sense of it cannot survive the amnesia resultant from the subversion of long circuits of attention and critical thinking by programming industries whose strategic goal is attention-capture and the undermining, if not the destruction, of inter-generational transference. The forces of control operating in the “worst” transformative dimension in which we now find ourselves strive to become “adaptive,” rather than adoptive, Stiegler points out; that is, entropic (Réenchanter le monde 122). Adaptation – to adapt to environmental circumstance – as opposed to adoption – to participate in the genealogical transmission and transformation of knowledge and culture – is for Stiegler not a matter of adjustment but of amnesia, of the mind in thrall to the spectacle of images and messages designed to **short-circuit attention and critique. Adaptation means “the imperatives of production that are secondary to shareholder expectations, and not producers of alternatives, of models of meta-transformation. Knowledge is intrinsically contradictory to adaptation, as innovation” (Réenchanter le monde 122). In other words, adaptation offers no alternative options to control, and emerges as the blocking of – the obstacle to – human development. Stiegler, [40] sees the ex-teriorization of memory – technics – as the very ground of human being as such (original prostheticity); all knowledge, Stiegler says, has its origins in exteriorization: memory is “exteriorization** re-interiorized in new intellectual and motor behaviors” (Réenchanter le monde 136). The transformative process of individuation is the process of exteriorization is grammatization**. Re-enchantment, then, “the re-enchantment of the world,” is beyond all else a gamble – indeed, according to Stiegler, a gamble against all the current odds. As the word “enchantment” implies, re-enchantment in a world currently “enchanted” (in thrall to) psychotechnologies would be nothing less than magical, resultant from supernatural forces. But despite seemingly overwhelming evidence, Stiegler is not pessimistic about this potential renewal; in his most recent work he sees the possibility of such a re-enchantment’s occurring as resting on the associative circuitry of “information, knowledge, technology, industry, and society as the fragile product of an international politics of the transformation of contemporary capitalism” (Réenchanter le monde 165; emphasis added). In the battle against disenchantment – whose other names are ennui and care-less-ness [incurie] – in the battle for intelligence and for the perpetual (re)creation of enchantment, the transformation of psychotechnologies** into “psychopolitics devoted to the service of a noopolitics . . . through technologies of the mind” (Taking **Care 339) is Stiegler’s great hope. There is no reason to think that this re-creation is not possible; indeed, Stiegler insists, we must assume that it is possible (to give Stiegler the last word): We can certainly go on struggling against care-less-ness and weigh the results. But we must face the consequences of recent information on the state of the human mind, on what is destroyed and on the possibilities of reconstructing what has been destroyed – on condition of fundamentally reversing the situation of this power as a psychopower, and of subjecting it to the controls prescribed by a psychopolitics placed in the service of a noopolitics, across an industrial politics of the mind. (Taking Care 339) Only through transindividuation – psychic, collective, and technical – can any hope of a future transcending our current thrall to programming**, an ontological future in the most fundamental sense, become a program for a future of the human in a world of psychotechnological mystifications.

**More ev**

#### Standing reserve justifies the destruction of the environment in order to maintain consumption

Housman and Flynn ’11:[[3]](#footnote-3)

**Heidegger echoes many of his earlier thoughts on technology from his Bremen lectures in his seminar in Le Thor two decades later, and supplements his earlier ideas with notions of consumption and replacability. He first speaks of the orderability of forests—how they are no longer integrated into our being but are viewed in terms of utility. A forest is now a systematically planned area designated as a “greenspace”, exploited by businessmen and technologists. We perceive this greenspace in terms of supply, in terms of standing reserve. Heidegger believes this way of relating to our surrounding, this way of being, lends itself to seeing objects as replaceable and for our consumption. He says, “Today being is being-replaceable…It is essential for every being of consumption that it be already consumed and thus call for its replacement” (2003 [1977], 62). This way of being, this predominance of replacement and consumption, is but another dimension of this overarching culture of positionality and technology. We think in terms of utility, application, and efficiency rather than in terms of guarding the thing itself. We dispose of objects without care; we use an object and then discard it, for its purpose has been served. Consider a water cooler. Every part of that water cooler—the plastic jug containing the water, the metal inside the cooler itself, the plastic cups for drinking the water—is discarded once it no longer performs its function or because we believe it has become contaminated and must be destroyed. Heidegger recognizes that this wasteful 36 culture has serious consequences for our being, and the consequences are now manifesting themselves quite markedly in global warming. Does this mean that Heidegger was implicitly encouraging an ethic of sustainability and recycling? Possibly, however Heidegger’s thought was more concerned with being, ensuring that we do not lose our essence, and that we do not become “slave[s] to the forgetfulness of being” (2003, 63). While his philosophy surely lends itself to an environmental ethic and sheds light on our activity fueling global warming, it was not explicitly directed at preserving our environment. Nevertheless, this abundance of replacement and consumption that Heidegger speaks of is simply unsustainable, for we do not have infinite resources and cannot continue to produce and consume at such high levels. Heidegger’s philosophy of technology, described in his Bremen lectures and discussed further at his seminar in Le Thor, in many ways paints a dark picture of our current mode of living in this world. We have become dependent on technology and now only relate to the world for the sake of how it can be applied. We see our surroundings as orderable, as standing reserve not yet utilized but soon to be positioned for our use and consumption, and fail to appreciate the environment as part of our being. This danger, and lack of distress about it, threatens our human essence as thought-worthy beings, as beings near to the thing as thing and guarding it. Yet, even after describing such an unsettling world, Heidegger remains hopeful that we can regain our essence and learn to incorporate our thought-worthy being into a technological world—say yes and at the same time no to technical devices—while still preserving our essential space. First, though, we must find our way back to this essential space and experience thinking in its original form, through its original correspondence. According to Heidegger, then, once 37 we revive our essence we can live with technology rather than as slaves to it and can find a way to prevent the damage of our earth due to global warming. Thinking is the path to letting being be, to allowing the world to world, and to guarding being, and it is here that we must now turn our attention.**

**Postsustainability is the result of embracing our death-bound bodies – must embrace depletion**

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Following Bataille, we can argue that the future, the fall into the void of certainties (God, Man, quantifiable and usable energy) may lead to another kind of spending, “on the scale of the universe,” which, in spite of itself, would entail what I have called postsustainability. We do not know; what is clear is that one kind of matter, one energy, one plenitude, is dying; another, monstrous, already here, already burning, announces itself. Hubbert’s peak announces it, yet betrays it, for Hubbert envisaged only one version of energy. Up until now the development of thought, of philosophy, has been inseparable from the fossil fuel–powered growth curve, from “civilization.” The downside of the bell curve is non-knowledge because the event of the decline of knowledge, the disengagement of philosophy from economic and social growth, cannot be thought from within the space of knowledge growth (the perfection of modern truth) or its concomitant absence. We are in unknowable, unthinkable territory— an era of disproportion, as Pascal might call it. The era of Bataille’s peak. “I love the ignorance concerning the future,” wrote Nietzsche, and Bataille seconded him. For Bataille, any assurances concerning the future, either good or bad, were beside the point, even silly; instead, there was the play of chance, the affirmation of what has happened, what will happen. The left hand spends, in gay blindness as well as science, and the future is affirmed, in the night of non-knowledge. 36 Does this mean that we should despair, and use this “ignorance” as an excuse to do nothing? Not at all; we know the difference between sustainability and catastrophic destruction; we know the difference between global warming and a chance for some, even limited, species survival. But we also recognize, with Bataille, the inseparability of knowledge and non-knowledge, the tilt point at which, rather than cowering in fear, we throw ourselves gaily into the future, accepting whatever happens, embracing everything, laughing at and with death. We will a return of recalcitrant bodily and celestial energy, of the sacrifice of the logic of the standing reserve; we bet against the vain effort to will an endless autonomist freedom. We know that sustainability, if such a thing ever were to come about, would be inseparable not from simple calculation and planning but from the blowback of the movement of an embrace of the transgressed limit, the intimacy of the world willed to ritual consumation, the embrace of death-bound bodies: postsustainability. 37 In other words, after Bataille, we refuse to take the downside of the bell curve as a simple and inevitable decline into feudalism, fundamentalism, extinction. We understand all that depletion implies, and we embrace it, affirming the movement of expenditure at its Varda-esque heart. 38 Who is this “we”? Not the self-satisfied “we” of a closed community or multitude, jealous of its rights and serene in its self-reflection. Rather, a notwe, emptied of meaning, unjustified— a community of those with nothing in common (Lingis 1994).

**Attempts to manage excess subordinates expenditure and results in the destruction of our planet**

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**One cannot deny the tendency to expend** on the part of humans; on the contrary, following Bataille, we can say that this conscious tendency to lose is what both ties us to the cataclysmic loss of the universe, of the endless, pointless giving of stars, and at the same time distinguishes us through our awareness, our savoir, of what cannot be known (sheer loss). **It is vain to try to deny this tendency**, to argue that destruction is ultimately somehow useful, that our role here on the planet is necessary, and necessarily stingy. **Parsimonious sustainability theory ends only in a cult of the self,** jealous in its marshalling of all available resources. **We are,** on the contrary, **gratuitous losers** (like any other animal, but more so, and conscious of it), **and this is our glory, our pleasure, our death trip, our finitude, our end. If** on the other hand **we try to substitute a mechanized, quantified, objectified version of expenditure and claim that it addresses all of our needs, our freedom, extravagance will be subordinated to our personal demand, energy will become mere refined power, and we end up running the risk of destroying ourselves on a planet where every atom has been put to work, made to fulfill human goals— and where every usable resource has been pushed to the point of depletion**. 13 But most of all, **in wasting in this way**, engaging in this blind travesty of the tendency to expend, **we deny any communication with** and through **the intimate world**, the other torn in erotic ecstasy, the movement of celestial bodies, the agony of God.

**The alternative results in a sustainable world with a new energy regime- conservation is an aftereffect of expenditure**

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**By separating** this **loss from industrial postconsumer waste, we** inadvertently **open the space of a postsustainable world. We no longer associate sustainability with a closed economy of production-consumption; rather, the economy of the world may be rendered sustainable so that the glory of expenditure can be projected into the indefinite future.** What is sustained, or hopefully sustained (since absolute sustainability makes no sense), is not a permanent subjectivity that slices and dices and doles out an inert and dangerously depletable (but necessarily static, posthistorical) world; instead, **the world is sustained as a fundamentally unplanned aftereffect of the tendency to expend. Unplanned** not **in the sense that recycling, reuse, and so on**, are to be ignored, but in that they **are an integral part, inseparable from and a consequence of, a blind spending** of the intimate world. The logic of conservation, in other words, is inseparable from expenditure**: we conserve in order to spend**, gloriously, **just as the worker** (according to Bataille), unlike the bourgeois, **works in order to have money to blow**. **Thus postsustainability**: sustainability not as a definitive knowledge in and as a final, unalterable historical moment, but rather **a knowledge as nonknowledge, practice as the end of practice, the affirmation of “nature”— including its fossil fuel energy reserves— that refuses to see it simply as a thing, as a concatenation of energy inputs that need only be managed**. Rather, **nature is what sustains itself when we sustain ourselves not as conservers but as profligate spenders— not of stockpiled energy, but of the energy of the universe** (as Bataille would put it) **that courses through our bodies,** above us, below us, and hurls us, in anguish, into communication with the violence, the limit, of time. The postsustainable economy is a general economy; beyond the desires and needs of the human “particle,” it entails the affirmation of resources conserved and energy spent on a completely different scale. **Rejecting mechanized waste, the world offers itself as sacred victim. The world we face, the world of “Hubbert’s peak”** (see Deffeyes 2001) **and the rapid decline of inert energy resources, is thus, paradoxically, a world full of expendable energy**— just as Bataille’s austere postwar era was wealthy in a way his contemporaries could not comprehend. **The peak of consumption and the revelation of the finitude, the depletion, of the calculable world is the opening of another world of energy expenditure and the opening of a wholly different energy regime**. And it is the blowout at the summit of a reason through which society has tried to organize itself. **The available energy that allows itself to be “perfected,” refined, and that therefore makes possible the performance of the maximum amount of work,** in service to the ghostly identity of Man, gives way to another energy, one that cannot simply be retrieved and refined, that defies any EROEI, that does work only by questioning work, that traverses our bodies, transfiguring and “transporting” them. We just need to understand fully what energy expenditure means. **Wealth is there to be grasped, recycled, burned, in and on the body, in and through the body’s death drive, as a mode of energy inefficiency, in the squandering of time, of effort, of focus.**

Bataille’s expenditure without reserve presents the best strategy for addressing today’s ecological issues.

Clark and Stevenson 03 (Nigel and Nick, JOURNALOF HUMAN RIGHTS, VOL 2 NO 2 (JUNE 2003), 235–246) JXu

By exploring the social and historical constitution of certain crucial concepts in this way, the sociological imagination is usefully wielded against some of the strictures of the ecological imagination. There may, however, be ways of extracting ourselves from a zero-sum game between human potentiality and the earth’s resourcefulness that have been less well rehearsed. The ethical-aesthetic sensibilities of Foucault that inform Darier’s and Sandilands’s pronouncements, we should recall, inherit a tradition of thinking through the rich potentiality of ‘life’ that can be traced back through the work of Bataille, to Nietzsche and beyond. Besides reminding us that ‘nature’ can be construed by human beings in many ways, this line of thought affirms the actual physical power of life – in all its guises – to produce new forms and expressions. Nietzsche, putting his own spin on the lessons of thermodynamics, described the world as ‘a monster of energy, without beginning, without end’ (1968: 550). Drawing together Nietzsche’s sense of an unceasing, energy-infused vitality of life with insights from the Soviet scientist Vladimir Vernadsky – who popularized the notion of the ‘biosphere’ – Bataille came up with a vision of social and biological life that put excess and exuberance at centre stage. At the same time, however, he gave full consideration to the significance of physical limits. For Bataille, the constant flow of solar energy bathing the earth’s surface is ultimately surplus to the requirements of living matter: it may be expended in growth or proliferation but eventually the limits of terrestrial space require that it must be ‘squandered’ in some way. The eventual necessity of ‘uselessly’ using up accumulated matter-energy presents a basic fact of life for all organisms, ourselves included. In this way, death, catastrophe and extinction are all necessary manifestations of the ‘explosive’ force of life, for they ‘make room for fresh beings coming into the cycle with renewed vigour’, and are thereby a vital part of the creative and generative process (Bataille 1986: 59). While Bataille has largely been passed over in environmental discourses, his ‘exuberant’ vision of life has found a warm reception in the ‘new biology’, a ‘non-traditional’ approach to the biological sciences which emphasizes the composite nature of living bodies and the resilience of life in the face of disturbance (Margulis and Sagan 1995: 164–165, Sagan 1992: 375–376). What is revealing to note is that prior to the rise of the modern environmental movement, and long before most of his fellow social scientists had begun to consider ecological issues, Bataille had a clear sense that modern economies were contributing to a potentially devastating build-up of energy. ‘(U)nprecedent accumulation’, he claimed, ‘. . . has turned the whole world into a colossal powder keg’ (1993: 428). In the context of global warming, Bataille’s precept of a ‘global exuberance of energy’ (1991: 74) has begun to appear more prescient than eccentric. Many of today’s ‘ecological issues’, from bioinvasion to emergent viruses, lake eutrophication to antibiotic resistance, are less symptomatic of a retreat of life so much as its unremitting vitality. In this way, Bataille’s insights chime with the conclusion of biologist Lynn Margulis, who highlights the ‘shocking prodigiousness’ of the living world, and reminds us that life ‘has fed on disaster and destruction from the beginning’ (1998: 137, 151). The lesson we might draw from Bataille, and from those who have taken his work seriously, is not that ecosystems are immune to human impact but that limits and excess are irrevocably bound together in the workings of our biosphere. And that human social life is unavoidably implicated in this interplay. In this way, the green ‘aesthetics of existence’ affirmed by Darier and others might draw its energy not merely from a sense of discursive play but from the knowledge that human social life is inevitably open to the greater play of life in general. A more ‘exuberant’ ecological imagination along such lines would not preclude an exacting quest for justice or sustainability but it might add a vital complementary charge: that of ‘gratitude toward the rich ambiguity of life’ that exceeds all calculation (see Connolly 1999: 139).

**The global warming impacts of the status quo are a reversal of the master slave dialect between humanity and nature. Their attempt to keep nature servile only creates greater outbursts in the future – makes extinction inevitable.**

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**If** for a moment **we assume that the global world of commerce**, replete with electronic media, the Internet, virtual television, and whatnot, **is the replacement for and the simulacrum of the nonuniversal city, we can only conclude that it can be so only as long as "nature no longer exists." But the fact that nature no longer exists**, or at least seems no longer to exist, **depends**, ironically, **on a natural given: the presence of fossil fuels in the earth‑oil and coal, primarily. Labor power discovered these fuels, put them to work, "harnessed" them, transformed their energy into something useful**. But labor power did not put the fuels in the earth. And perhaps more important from our perspective, it will be hard‑pressed to replace them when they are gone. **Nature‑produced** energy‑the "homogeneous" energy that lends itself to work and the other, "**heterogeneous" energy that is sovereign, not servile**.22 If the very term "nature" is contestable, one thing that cannot be contested is that the primary sources of energy come from natural sources: **millions of years of algae accumulating in certain ecosystems**, for example.23 Thus **pollution, dependent on this energy** from natural sources, **is ultimately natural; so too is global warming. So too is the incomprehensible unharnessed energy of the universe**, which our labor and knowledge can only betray. **So too will be massive die‑off of humans and other organisms at the point of depletion**. Man as the author of his own creation-homo faber‑is opened by the radical exteriority the finitude, the heterogeneity, but also the infinite richness of nature. **Man**, as Sade would remind us, **can never hope to have his reason domesticate a nature that "threatens the adequacy of rational systematicity"24 or that defies the seeming necessity of all human activity. Nature deals death, and there is no way, finally, to grasp it by simply exploiting it ("knowing" it**) as a resource or analyzing away its threat as sublime difference.

1. Cite on last card [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Stoekl, Allan. *Bataille's Peak: Energy, Religion, and Postsustainability*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 2007. Print. Professor of French and comparative literature at Penn State University, [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. professors of philosophy Emory, 2011 (Benjamin and Thomas, “Cooling Down Global Warming: Revisiting Sartre and Heidegger on this Modern Day Challenge”) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)